

Funding Opportunity: Afghan University Student Exchange Program (AUSEP)
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-20-CA-002-SCA-02292020
Questions and Answers

Question 1: Will the U.S. Embassy, in Kabul, Afghanistan host the pre-departure orientation, or should U.S. based applicants coordinate with an Afghan partner to host the orientation? Any additional guidance on the pre and post program meetings would be greatly appreciated.

Answer: The successful applicant will be responsible for hosting both the pre-departure orientation as well as post-program gathering in Afghanistan for students upon their return from the program. It is up to the applicant to determine how it will fulfill these requirements. The pre-departure orientation should prepare students for the program, set expectations regarding the program schedule, travel, requirements, student behavior, etc. Upon the return of students to Afghanistan, the implementing partner shall host a gathering for the program participants to share their experience, findings, and accomplishments. If possible, a representative from the U.S. Embassy will attend these meetings.

Question 2: Does the Department of State have any suggestions for transferring funds from the U.S. to India and Afghanistan based on experience from previous programs? We are trying to work through all potential challenges, and providing living expenses (per diem) for 50 people over 10-weeks might present some possible challenges.

Answer: No. It is up to the applicant to determine how to best meet the program requirements laid out in the NOFO. If meals and lodging are paid directly by the grantee to the vendor/s, students' cash needs will likely be minimal; however, this is for the applicants to determine/propose.

Question 3: Any clarification regarding the expectations, responsibility, and involvement of the Afghan English Educators is appreciated. We understand the expectation regarding coordination for the development of course curriculum and materials. We wanted to know if we should budget for compensation for them, and if the U.S. Embassy envisions them traveling outside Afghanistan for the 10-week program?

Answer: The Afghan English Educators (AEEs) should be full-time faculty or lecturers from the English Language Departments of Afghan public universities. The grantee should conduct an open competition to select the AEEs. The AEEs will work together with the American English Language Experts (AELEs) on the development and delivery of the course curriculum and materials. As the AEEs must have a solid understanding of the Afghan context; they must ensure that the course curriculum and materials are developed in accordance with the needs of the Afghan students and Afghan cultural

values. Along with the AELEs, the AEEs should provide input to the student participant recruitment process (development of student application forms, student interviews, etc.). The AEEs should travel to the host country and assist the AELEs during the program. The AEEs may deliver several program training sessions; however, their role will be more of a support capacity.

Question 4: Is selection/recruitment of participants open to all national universities – public and private?

Answer: Only participants from the English Departments of the Afghan public universities will be recruited for the program. Students and educators from private universities are not eligible.

Question 5: Page 3 of the NOFO states, “The recipient must identify two American English Language Experts and Afghan English Educators to work in coordination to develop the course curriculum and materials.” Is that two American English Language Experts and two separate Afghan English Educators, 4 individuals or two overall?

Answer: There should be four individuals- two American English Language Experts (AELEs) and two Afghan English Educators (AEEs).

Question 6: Page 3 of the NOFO states, “Each training session should include 25 juniors (third year) English majors from Afghan universities as well as two university-affiliated group leaders.” Can these “two university-affiliated group leaders” also be the Afghan English Educators, or must be they be two separate and additional individuals?

Answer: The two university-affiliated leaders should be selected from the faculties of Afghan public universities. They shall be selected through an open-competition. They can be from any department, but must have adequate English skills to effectively communicate with the AELEs. The successful applicant shall develop the criteria and mechanism for the group leaders’ selection, which will be reviewed by the PAS. The leaders will function as liaisons/chaperons and mentors to the students during the program. They are expected to be organized and the ideal role models for the program participants by exhibiting exemplary behavior and cooperation with students, the AEEs, AELEs, and the other group leader. The two university-affiliated leaders will ensure that all the participants attend all program activities. They shall be also engaged with the students in all the program activities and extracurricular planning. They will help the students to resolve problems and conduct themselves appropriately during the program. They shall also ensure the wellbeing and safety of the all the participants during the program. Different individuals should be selected as university-affiliated group leaders for each cohort. The two university-affiliated group leaders must be different individuals from the two AEEs.

Question 7: Must each training session be held in the same host country during the life of the program?

Answer: Yes, each training session must be held in the same host country during the life of the program.

Question 8: Is a more detailed description of the scope of work for the American English Language Experts and Afghan English Educators available? What distinguishes the American English Language Experts and Afghan English Educators?

Answer: The American English Language Experts (AELEs) must be native English speakers with master's degrees in TESOL, PhDs are preferable. The AELEs should have experience teaching English in non-native English speaking countries. The AELEs shall design, develop, and deliver the program curriculum and materials. The successful applicant shall design and execute the recruitment process for the AELEs in close coordination with PAS.

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Question 9: Will the two university-affiliated group leaders be students, or is it anticipated that the group leaders will be representatives from one of the universities represented in the cohort?

Answer: The two university-affiliated leaders should be selected from the faculties of Afghan public universities. They shall be selected through an open-competition. They can be from any department, but must have adequate English skills to effectively communicate with the AELEs. The successful applicant shall develop the criteria and mechanism for the group leaders' selection, which will be reviewed by the PAS. The leaders will function as liaisons/chaperons and mentors to the students during the program. They are expected to be organized and the ideal role models for the program participants by exhibiting exemplary behavior and cooperation with students, the AEEs, AELEs, and the other group leader. The two university-affiliated leaders will ensure that all the participants attend all program activities. They shall be also engaged with the students in all the program

activities and extracurricular planning. They will help the students to resolve problems and conduct themselves appropriately during the program. They shall also ensure the wellbeing and safety of the all the participants during the program. Different individuals should be selected as university-affiliated group leaders for each cohort. The two university-affiliated group leaders must be different individuals from the two AEEs.

Question 10: Will the group leaders function similar to liaisons or be participants included in the group of 25?

Answer: The two university-affiliated leaders should be selected from the faculties of Afghan public universities. They shall be selected through an open-competition. They can be from any department, but must have adequate English skills to effectively communicate with the AELEs. The successful applicant shall develop the criteria and mechanism for the group leaders' selection, which will be reviewed by the PAS. The leaders will function as liaisons/chaperons and mentors to the students during the program. They are expected to be organized and the ideal role models for the program participants by exhibiting exemplary behavior and cooperation with students, the AEEs, AELEs, and the other group leader. The two university-affiliated leaders will ensure that all the participants attend all program activities. They shall be also engaged with the students in all the program activities and extracurricular planning. They will help the students to resolve problems and conduct themselves appropriately during the program. They shall also ensure the wellbeing and safety of the all the participants during the program. Different individuals should be selected as university-affiliated group leaders for each cohort. The two university-affiliated group leaders must be different individuals from the two AEEs.

Question 11: We are considering incorporating a U.S.-based study tour exchange component to the post-program content. If a U.S.-based exchange is permissible, can cohorts traveling to the U.S. be gender-mixed?

Answer: U.S.-based exchange is not permissible.

Question 12: Is the Kyrgyz Republic considered one of the neighboring countries eligible to host AUSEP?

Answer: Yes. PAS will take a broad interpretation of "neighboring" countries. However, applicants should consider ease of travel for participants to the proposed location to include length and complexity of travel, visa requirements, cost effectiveness, as well as the conduciveness of the location/environment to achieving the stated objectives of this English program. The rationale for selecting the proposed host institution should be included in the proposal.

Question 13: Can U.S.-based organizations apply for this program?

Answer: Yes.

Question 14: Is there any flexibility in the program dates for university partners?

Answer: There are two academic calendars followed by Afghan public universities. The program dates outlined in the NOFO are set based on the winter break during the academic calendar many public universities in Afghanistan follow. For the purposes of the proposal, the applicant should assume the program will take place during the timeframe stated in the NOFO. PAS, in consultation with the grantee, may decide to adjust the program dates in future to accommodate students from public universities on the other academic schedule.

Question 15: Should students receive academic credit during the program?

Answer: No.

Question 16: Is there a possibility to have mixed-gendered cohorts?

Answer: PAS will consider proposals that include mixed-gender cohorts. However, the applicant should consider cultural norms and explain how the proposed gender breakdown per cohort will result in maximum participation by both genders.

Question 17: Is there a pre-program minimum English proficiency level that will be required of participating students?

Answer: The participating students must have significant English Language proficiency to fully benefit from the program. It will be up to the successful applicant to determine which students have the necessary English proficiency during the recruitment stage. It is up to the recipient to design and execute the recruitment process, but at a minimum must include students submitting applications and interviews of short-listed candidates. The application forms shall be developed by the successful applicant and submitted to PAS for review and approval. Interviews of short-listed candidates will enable the successful applicant to determine if the interviewee's English language abilities are adequate to participate in the program. PAS shall be invited to participate in interviews of short-listed candidates.

Question 18: Are there any additional considerations regarding gender to be aware of, such as male cohorts requiring only male instructors and support staff, and vice-versa?

Answer: The applicant should consider cultural norms.

Question 19: Should the focus of the program be to improve the participants' pedagogical skills, to improve their English language fluency, or both?

Answer: The program should focus on improving the pedagogical skills of the participants.

Question 20: Is the training that PAS wants delivered supposed to be relatively general and applicable to teaching at all levels? Or is there a desire that the training be focused on preparing teachers at the K-12 level? University level?

Answer: The training shall focus on preparing English teachers for teaching at Afghan universities.

Question 21: Annex 4 M&E definitions provide guidance that indicators should describe whether the program is achieving the given outputs and outcomes, and selection criteria states that the application must include output and outcome indicators. But the template on p. 25 and two examples contain indicators for the goal. Please clarify which type of results indicators are required for.

Answer: Pages 9 and 10 of the NOFO include a list of outcomes (e.g. measurable improvement in participants' English Language pedagogical skills) that an applicant's M&E plan must include indicators to track. The applicant's M&E plan must, at a minimum, include output and outcome indicators the applicant proposes to use to track progress on the items listed on pages 9 and 10 of the NOFO. The template and examples are included as guidance for drafting a complete M&E plan, and including higher order goals of the program.

Question 22: Annex 4 guidance on p. 35 states that indicators are not required for the proposal but will be required of the selected grantee before an award is signed, while other parts of the NOFO (P. 9-10, Indicator Reference Sheet (IRS) and P. 15) indicate indicators are required for the IRS/M&E plan to be complete. Please clarify.

Answer: Pages 9 and 10 of the NOFO include a list of outcomes (e.g. measurable improvement in participants' English Language pedagogical skills) that an applicant's M&E plan must include indicators to track. The applicant's M&E plan must, at a minimum, include output and outcome indicators the applicant proposes to use to track progress on the items listed on pages 9 and 10 of the NOFO. Proposed indicators are subject to changes from PAS before the award is finalized. This process allows edits to a proposed M&E plan before award, to ensure it is capable of capturing project impact.

Question 23: On page 3 of the NOFO, it is said that “each training session should include 25 juniors (third year) English majors...as well as two university-affiliated group leaders.” Will you please clarify what do you mean by the university-affiliated group leaders? Are they the leaders selected from among the same 25 students or are they the seniors in addition to these 25?

Answer: The two university-affiliated leaders should be selected from the faculties of Afghan public universities. They shall be selected through an open-competition. They can be from any department, but must have adequate English skills to effectively communicate with the AELEs. The successful applicant shall develop the criteria and mechanism for the group leaders' selection, which will be reviewed by the PAS. The leaders will function as liaisons/chaperons and mentors to the students during the program. They are expected to be organized and the ideal role models for the program participants by exhibiting exemplary behavior and cooperation with students, the AEEs, AELEs, and the other group leader. The two university-affiliated leaders will ensure that all the participants attend all program activities. They shall be also engaged with the students in all the program activities and extracurricular planning. They will help the students to resolve problems and conduct themselves appropriately during the program. They shall also ensure the wellbeing and safety of the all the participants during the program. Different individuals should be selected as university-affiliated group leaders for each cohort. The two university-affiliated group leaders must be different individuals from the two AEEs.

Question 24: Should the 25 juniors be selected from universities in major provinces?

Answer: The program should be open to students at all English departments of public universities; selected participants should reflect the geographic diversity of Afghanistan.

Question 25: Should the recruitment plan be submitted along with the proposal? (Page 3: Recruitment and Program Logistics)

Answer: Yes, the recruitment plan should be submitted along with the proposal.

Question 26: Does the American English Language (AEL) Expert have to be an American citizen? Or s/he can be a citizen of any other country? (Page 3: Curriculum Development)

Answer: The American English Language Experts (AELEs) must be native English speakers with master's degrees in TESOL, PhDs are preferable. The AELEs should have experience teaching English in non-native English speaking countries.

Question 27: Should the AEL Experts have to be residing in Kabul or can be based in any other country?

Answer: The AELEs do not need to reside in Kabul, and can be based in any country.

Question 28: Can the AEL Experts develop the curriculum from their country of residence and visit Kabul or the host country before the training session begin?

Answer: Yes. Applicants should balance cost effectiveness and the approach to curriculum development they find to be most effective. For example, the AELEs and AEEs could work together virtually on the curriculum from their country of residence then travel to the host country shortly (e.g. one week) before the participants arrive to ensure the host institution is prepared for the program and to make any final adjustments to the program plan or materials.

Question 29: Do the AEL Experts and Afghan English Educator be a full-time staff?

Answer: It is up to the applicant to propose staffing levels to adequately carryout the program. The AELEs and AEEs do not necessarily need to be full-time staff. Since the AEEs will be full-time public university faculty, it is not realistic for them to devote fulltime effort to this project.

Question 30: Should the project partners also submit a security plan? And does it have to be submitted along with the proposal (along with the security plan of the lead applicant)? How detailed must this plan be? (Pages 4-5; Page 11)

Answer: Yes, the applicants should submit a security plan along with the proposal. It is up to the applicant to determine what is included in its security plan. The application should address the security plan for all aspects of the project. If a partner/sub-grantee is carrying out project activities, the security plan in the proposal should cover those activities.

Question 31: How detailed must an “Organizational Policy for working in high-risk environments” be? Is it really a must-have doc? (Page 11: Required Attachments)

Answer: The Organizational Policy for working in high-risk environments is required. It is up to the applicant to determine what is included in its policy.

Question 32: On page 3 in the objectives section could you specify the target group to whom the project intends to impart pedagogical skills, knowledge about teaching English, classroom management skills, use of technology in English language teaching and teaching practices. As different pedagogical skills are needed for different levels of classroom teaching.

Answer: The target group to whom the project intends to impart pedagogical skills will be the of English language major students at public universities in Afghanistan.

Question 33: On page 11 the section on “Required Attachments” asks for a letter of intent (LoI). Is there any particular format of LoI that should be followed while submitting the same as part of the project proposal

Answer: There is no specific format for the letter of intent.

Question 34: Can individuals employed at the host institution, if found to be eligible, be considered for hiring as AEL experts and Afghan English educators?

Answer: As the AEEs must be present faculty/lecturers of the English Departments at Afghan public universities, employees of host institutions would not qualify to be AEEs. Employees of the host institution may qualify as AELEs, if they meet the requirements outlined in the answer to question 8.

Question 35: am enquiring if the American University of Beirut is eligible to apply. I could not find a definition for “neighboring country” to Afghanistan which the opportunity seems to be targeting.

Answer: Yes. PAS will take a broad interpretation of “neighboring” countries. However, applicants should consider ease of travel for participants to the proposed location to include length/complexity of travel, visa requirements, cost effectiveness, as well as the conduciveness of the location/environment to achieving the stated objectives of this English program. The rationale for selecting the proposed host institutions should be included in the proposal.

Question 36: With respect to the Afghan University Student Exchange Program, I am writing to inquire about the feasibility of offering the intensive five-week, American-style, professional training program for participants in the United States (or United States Virgin Islands).

Answer: Proposals to host the program in the U.S. or U.S. Virgin Islands will not be considered for this funding opportunity.